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RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 6853
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 4568
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 3208
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 7710
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 1794
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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/R/MR:STHIBEAULT AND
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, AZAIBACK, AND
AFERNANDEZ, IIP/G/NEA-SA MDAVIDSON
WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC
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SUBJECT: Syria/Italy, Lebanon, Iraq, Israel/Palestinians (6/6)

¶1. Summary: Syrian papers on June 6 reported President Asad's meeting on June 5 with Italian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Massimo Dalima focusing on bilateral relations and the latest developments in Iraq, the occupied Palestinian territories and Lebanon. Both sides stressed the necessity of cooperation to find a solution to the Middle East crisis. They also conferred on the possibility of building mutual work mechanisms to find solutions for the current crises on the regional level. The two sides underlined the significance of combating the terrorism that is spreading in the region. Dalima affirmed the necessity of making Syria part of the efforts to achieve peace and stability in the region, stressing the importance of Syria's role on this issue.

In a joint press conference with FM Mouallem on June 5, Dalima described his talks with President Asad as "very important," stressing that "this visit is a turning point for consolidated ties between Syria and Italy to face challenges in the region."

"My country supports establishing a partnership Association between Syria and the European Union and working to remove obstacles which hinder realization of this Association," Dalima added.

The Italian Minister stressed the important and effective role of Syria in solving problems in the region, saying, "We are convinced it is not possible to solve issues in the Palestinian, Lebanese and Iraqi arenas without Syria's participation."

He noted that Italy attaches great importance to the Arab peace initiative, which "opens horizons for a comprehensive solution to issues caused by the 1967 war", and that "the restoration of occupied Golan is an essential point to achieve peace in the region."

Dalima expressed his country's readiness to help Lebanon avoid terrorism and all that might destabilize Lebanon, and to encourage dialogue among the Lebanese to find a way out of the current crisis.

"I'm optimistic about the possibility of cooperation between Syria and Italy to find a solution to the problems occurring in Lebanon, and help Lebanon avoid terrorism, which harms its security and stability," Dalima said.

On the latest events in Lebanon and repercussions on the Italian troops deployed within UNIFEL in South Lebanon, Dalima said, "We have warned against the danger of infiltrating terrorist militants into the Palestinian camps."

End of summary.

12. Selected Headlines:

"President Asad reviews bilateral relations and means of achieving peace in the region and combating terrorism with Massimo Dalima, Italian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. Dalima: We are convinced that there will be no solution in the region without Syria. Foreign Minister Mouallem: He who accuses Syria of being involved with Fatah al-Islam is concealing the real identity of those behind this group" (Government-owned Tishreen, 6/6)

"Israel studies the possibility of resuming peace talks with Syria" (Independent al-Watan, 6/6)

"Clashes continue in Nahr al-Bared. Lebanese circles: The governing team is responsible for all that is happening" (Government-owned Tishreen, 6/6)

"Confessions by detained Fatah al-Islam fighters expose the governing team's involvement with this group. The Lebanese army tightens siege on Fatah al-Islam fighters. Nationalist Lebanese figures warn against a conspiracy to export terrorism to Lebanon" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 6/6)

"President Lahoud: I will use my constitutional authority to prevent Lebanon's drowning. They can kill me, but they cannot force me to kneel" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 6/6)

"On the 40th anniversary of June 6 War, Abbas warns against a Palestinian civil war. 82 Palestinians killed because of the security lapse in the Palestinian territories" (Independent al-Watan, 6/6)

"The Baghdad security plan faces some obstacles. 73 of Americans believe that they are on the wrong path in Iraq" (Independent, al-Watan, 6/6)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"To the Advocates of Justice"

Omar Jaftali, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, wrote (6/6): "Terrorism against the Palestinian people is an official Israeli policy.... Those who claim to be fighting terrorism must stop turning a blind eye to Israeli terrorist acts against Palestinians...."

"So far the international community has failed to hold Israel accountable for its crimes against humanity, as represented by the occupation of Palestinian territories and the killing of innocent people and the destruction of their homes...."

"The criminal Israeli occupation has always been covered up by the United States and Europe without any convincing reason, with neither of them calling on Israel to end this explosive situation and violation of UN resolutions and international law...."

"To Avoid Being Alone"

Ali Qasim, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawrah, wrote (6/6): "With the increasing number of fatalities among US soldiers in Iraq and the talk about an imminent British withdrawal from that country, the crisis of the US Administration in Iraq is becoming more obvious than ever...."

"While US officials continue their obstinacy about the obvious collapse of their plans in Iraq, we read some American statements saying that victory in Iraq is becoming more and more difficult.... President Bush, who is seeing all those who pushed him to war against Iraq, on the basis of lies and deception, fall one after the other, might think of new arrangements to evade the moment of confrontation with the truth when he finds himself alone in Iraq and in the White House itself"

"Lebanon, between Nahr al-Bared and Ein al-Hilweh, Whereto?"

Khurshid Dalli, an editorialist in independent Al-Watan, wrote (6/6): "No observer can separate the events in Nahr al-Bared from what Lebanon has been witnessing since the al-Hariri assassination.... The situation is becoming more serious in Lebanon, with the clashes spreading to a second Palestinian camp and the political crisis remaining without solution...."

"Facts on the ground indicate that Lebanon is heading toward internationalization and a repetition of the Iraqi experience.... What is the secret behind the urgent American military supplies to Lebanon...? Who allowed the fundamentalist groups to grow in that country...? The accusations that the governing team is leveling against Syria strengthen the belief that what is happening is part of a political plan to achieve already set objectives...."

"Cindy Sheehan and Our Causes"

Dr. Buthaina Sha'ban, Minister of Expatriate Affairs, wrote in government-owned Tishreen(6/6): "Cindy Sheehan's resignation from the Democratic Party was disappointing, because the American antiwar activist was a beacon for all defenders of freedom and justice in the world...."

"But when I read her eloquent and expressive resignation letter, I realized the magnitude of the problem she faced...."

"Sheehan lost the support of Democrats after she resigned from the party and made it clear that her opposition to the war was based on ethical not partisan considerations.... No one in the United States is allowed to change the criteria of the American system, as this change would mean a change in the position toward the Arab region and perhaps a completely different American policy, something that neither of the two American parties is willing to do...."

"Republican and Democratic presidential candidates make statements in which they express full support for Israel and cast Arabs and Muslims in a negative light.... Sheehan did a noble job and it is her right to rest if she wants, but it is not our right to let what she struggled for collapse and die. She has reached a very important and sensitive point for herself and for us, and all honorable people in the world must support one another and continue the march, for the alternative is inhuman, unethical, and has no future among nations that aspire to freedom, independence, and dignity."

Corbin